

and resource, might perhaps have succeeded where he had failed. Billow could certainly not have done worse. Not all his readers, however, will be convinced, for he had unhesitatingly followed the Austrian lead in the Bosnian crisis, and he had known of the Schlieffen plan since its birth in 1905.

In the first printer of the conflict Billow was summoned from his retirement for a task which he alone seemed fitted to perform. No one had expected Italy to fight on the side of her allies, though the full measure of her estrangement was not known till the secrets of the archives were revealed after the war. The utmost that could be hoped was that she might be prevented from stabbing her old friends in the back. For this object it would be necessary to pay her a high territorial price at Austria's expense, for it was Austrian territory that she coveted. Billow was aware of the delicacy of the situation, particularly in persuading Francis Joseph and his advisers to make the necessary sacrifice, but he did not regard his mission as absolutely hopeless. That he failed was not his fault. Yet he had no justification for laying the main share of the blame on the statesmen of Berlin and Vienna and their diplomatic representatives in Italy, whom he accuses of sabotaging his efforts. His charges have been indignantly rebutted by Macchio, the Austrian Ambassador, in his book *Wahrheit:*

*Furst Bu/lon> undich in ROM 1914-15, and more briefly by Jagow, the German Foreign Minister, and Flotow, the German Ambassador, in the formidable co-operative volume *Front wider J\$ulon>*, edited by Thimme. We are now aware that failure was inevitable, for Salandra, the Italian Premier, has confessed in *La Neutralita Italiana*, the first volume of his Memoirs, that after the battle of the Marne he decided on war, postponing*

military intervention till the army was ready.

Billow earned little gratitude for his efforts, and he knew that he had nothing to expect so long as Bethmann was at the helm. Since, however, the Chancellor's inefficiency in time of war was realized by every one from the ruler downwards, there seemed just a chance that the most brilliant and experienced of German statesmen might be recalled to office. William H had swallowed his dislike of Kiderlen, and with his waning prestige he would hardly have dared to veto such an appointment if it had been backed by a widespread demand. Such a demand, unfortunately for Billow, did not exist. His offer of concessions to Italy at the expense of Austria deeply wounded the pride of the old Emperor and the Ballplatz,